(c) Details of collections made in Maharashtra cannot be given for the reasons given in part (a) above. Government is not aware of the incomes likely to arise to the Income tax professionals for helping assessees under the VDIS.

Lalmaria Coal Mines

539. SHRI JAGDAMBI PRASAD YADAV : Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government had earlier proposed to set up a separate coal company by amalgamating the Lalmaria Coal Mines and its adjoining coal mines but later abandoned it on some extraneous conditions;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken by the Governments to set up a separate company for the development of the aforesaid coalfield area?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH) : (a) to (c) The Rajmahal Project of Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL) is situated at Lalmatia. A proposal for a new company with Rajmahal Coalfield and Deogarh Coalfield of ECL was placed before the 124th meeting of the Board of Directors of Coal India Limited held on 29.8.1992. The Board did not agree for creating a separate company because of low volume of output. However, it was suggested that Rajmahal may be put under the control of Director-in-Charge with the powers of Chairman-cum-Managing Director who could take steps for the fast development of these coalfields. The Government has a proposal for creation of a post of Director for Rajmahal group of mines.

[Translation]

Smuggling of Opium, Ganja Etc.

540. SHRI DADA BABURAO PARANJPE : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the large scale smuggling of opium, ganja and silver which is going on in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh in connivance with local police officials; and

(b) if so, the measures taken so far by the Union Government to check it?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Growth Rate

541. SHRI PANKAJ CHOWDHARY : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been decline in the country's economy during the last few years;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government propose to take immediate action to bring about improvement in the economy; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (d) As per estimates released by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), total GDP growth at factor cost during 1996–97 was 6.8 per cent. With this, the Eighth Five Year plan (1992–1997) ended with an average annual growth rate of 6.5 per cent compared with 6.0 per cent during the Seventh Five Year Plan.

The government announced a number of economic reforms measures in the Budget 1997–98 to boost industrial and overall growth. These include reduction of income tax and corporate tax rates, rationalisation of excise and custom duties, removal of restrictions in agriculture, industry, trade, giving functional autonomy to PSUs, etc.

Economic Reforms

542. SHRI D.P. YADAV : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the interference of International monetary Fund and World Bank in Indian Economy is constantly increasing since the implementation of economic reforms;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) whether the poverty will be eliminated as a result of eight per cent growth rate of the country;

(d) if so, whether the foreign exchange reserve of India has increased due to economic reform but the balance of payment is not satisfactory; and

(e) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) There is no interference of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) in the implementation of economic reforms.

(c) A durable solution for elimination of poverty is to bring about sustained growth in incomes and productive employment. This is the basic objective of economic reforms. Two main factors on which poverty reduction ultimately depends are (i) growth rate of population and (ii) growth rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). If the economy grows at eight per cent per annum on an average for next 10–15 years, it is possible that with appropriate policies, poverty can be eliminated within one generation.

(d) and (e) The economic stabilisation measures undertaken by the Government since 1991 have produced